

Chains by JoecyD (orphan_account)

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Summary:

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Chains

"Have you made your choice, Mr. Harrington?"

The question makes Steve shudder. Brenner makes them sound like a herd of cattle, waiting to be branded by an owner who would claim them as their own, a piece of property. They are goods. Nothing more.

"No." Steve's voice is weak. Watching the way they pant under the hot sun, their skin secreting shiny drops of sweat, it's making him feel ill. He can feel the heat radiating off of them. It isn't a natural heat, but a sickly, humid heat that sticks to his skin and feels like a disease. He needs to get out of there.

Brenner's voice interrupts his thoughts again. "If you're having trouble choosing, I could point you in the right direction." The words should sound helpful, friendly even, but Steve can hear the sneer in his voice. His eyes are filled with contempt and disgust when he looks at them, "This one here is a beauty," Brenner walks down the line and stops in front of a young girl. Her eyes flick up to stare at Steve from under copper-coloured eyelashes before darting away. Her skin is deathly pale despite the persistence of the sun's rays. She must have been locked inside for months. Her hair is a dull, unhealthy shade of red that hangs to her shoulders in greasy strings. The circles under her eyes are a deep purple-blue.

Despite all this, she holds her head high. Her spine is straight as a board and her mouth is pressed into a hard line of barely reigned in anger, defiance, and even pride.

"Name's Maxine, though of course change it to whatever you want," Brenner tells him. He stalks towards her, looking her up and down. Then tilts his head back to Steve "16"

Steve swallows and looks away, he's fully aware of why Brenner felt the need to bring up her legal age, he feels like vomiting, can't bear to look at her. At any of them.

He doesn't want to do this. He's itching to get out of here and forget the whole ordeal, but he's put this off for far too long.

His eyes drift away from the girl with the clenched teeth and the fire in her eyes and fall upon icy blue, hooded under dark lashes. The eyes of absolute resignation the emptiness Steve sees in them make something clench painfully inside him.

Steve stares. Brenner notices. He gives Maxine one last degrading

sneer and turns his back on her. She spits and just manages to miss the his feet. It is obvious that this one still has spirit, a hope – even if it's carefully hidden – for a better future. Steve can't see any of that in the this one.

"This one more your type?" Brenner asks with a quirk of his lips, sauntering over and nudging him. He's trying to get a rise out of him. Steve waits, watches for some sign of retaliation or defence. There is none. The man stands, head bowed, long blonde, greasy hair over this face. Unlike the girl his skin is has a deep tan and is heavy sunburnt on his exposed skin, old bruises surrounded by sallow yellow.

"Billy." Brenner jerks Billy's chin up so that Steve's has a better view. The sun's rays hit the the mans face, despite his dishevelled appearance Steve can see underneath he's good looking, in another life he well my of been a model with his sharp eyebrows and strong jawline. "Previous owner gave him a couple beatings, as you can see, but don't let that discourage you. This one's strong as an ox. He's a fighter."

He doesn't look like a fighter. He doesn't look like anything. Just a shell. Steve supposes that's how he's stayed alive: by keeping himself lifeless.

"Tell you what, He's banged up, so I'll give you a Ten percent discount".

Steve flinches. Is this what awaits Billy if he leaves here today empty handed? Is this what awaits all of them, being sold for discount prices like used cars?. So he is decided, He'll take him home. He'll treat him well, feed him, clean his wounds. Billy will be thankful.

"I'll take him"

Steve isn't like the others. While most everyone around him seems to thrive in this violent, angry environment they've created for themselves, Steve can't. There is something ingrained deep inside of him, an instinct that runs straight through to his soul to save people, not hurt them. And Steve wants to save Billy.

Question is, is there anything left to save?.

It's as if Brenner can read his thoughts because he shoots him a suspicious glance. "You do know the laws of owning, don't you, Harrington ?"

"Yeah."

"Good. Then you know the consequences you could suffer if you let 'him go."

"Yeah I said I get it" Steve retorts. Brenner stares at him for another moment or two, his eyes narrowed, before nodding his head. "Well if you could just come inside and I'll get the the paperwork, you can make the payment.

Steve nods.

Brenner nods in the direction of the building and Steve starts to follow him back. his skin crawls with discomfort and he glances back, the others are staring at him. Their eyes are wide and desperate, silently pleading for Steve to save them instead, take them home, show them mercy. He turns his head away feeling nothing but pure guilt.

Billy's eyes follow Steve's boots as they leave.